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Town Hall Meeting on CHIP (Children's Health Insurance Program)

Max S. Baucus

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Senator * or Department*: **BAUCUS**

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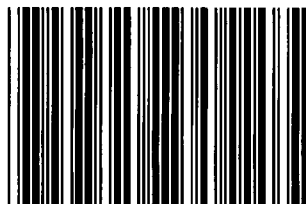
(2) Subject* **CHIP**

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BAUCUS

Town Hall Meeting on the Children's Health Insurance Program
Opening Statement of Senator Max Baucus
August 14, 2007

The early 20th Century cartoonist Kin Hubbard once said: "There's no secret to success. Did you ever know a successful [person] who didn't tell you all about it?"

We're here today to talk about a real success: the State Children's Health Insurance Program, or CHIP.

CHIP works. Since the program began 10 years ago, CHIP has cut the number of kids without health insurance by more than a third.

Health insurance matters. Because of CHIP, millions of kids get checkups. They see doctors when they are sick. They get the prescription medicines that they need.

Uninsured kids suffer. Nearly half of uninsured kids have not had a checkup in the past year. Uninsured kids are twice as likely to miss out on doctor visits and checkups. When care is delayed, small problems can become big problems.

I think of a single mom from Helena who learned that her son had epilepsy. She found out right after her son lost private insurance coverage.

She checked into other health plans. But none covered the expensive medicines that her son needed. The insurance companies called her son's epilepsy "a pre-existing condition."

Then a friend told her about CHIP. She applied. And she found out that her son was eligible. Thanks to CHIP, this young man got the medicines that he needed. And his mother got the peace of mind that she deserved.

CHIP makes sense. A kid who's healthy can go to school. A kid who's healthy in school is more likely to do well. A kid who does well in school is more likely to get a job. And people with jobs are less likely to end up in jail or on public assistance.

CHIP helps. CHIP helps more than 6 million kids whose parents work but cannot afford insurance on their own. These working families are not poor enough for Medicaid. And they are not rich enough to afford private health insurance.

It's time to strengthen CHIP. Millions of kids have no health insurance. There are more kids without health insurance than there are kids in the first and second grades. Americans overwhelmingly support getting kids covered.

I'm proud to have worked to get the Senate to pass a CHIP bill last month. Did you ever know someone in Congress who didn't tell you all about what he's been doing?

But this CHIP bill is a real success. It will fulfill CHIP's promise to the more than 6 million kids now covered. And our bill will cover more than 3 million more kids who are now uninsured.

This bill is a good compromise. It puts enough money on the table to make a difference for kids. It keeps CHIP focused on kids. And it's paid for.

The Senate passed our bill by a vote of 68 to 31. That's better than 2 to 1. How many important things have you heard of in Washington where there is that much agreement? This CHIP bill is a shining example of something where all sorts of people worked together to get something done.

CHIP is not new. CHIP is tried and true. It has been a success for 10 years. And 4 out of 5 Americans want to see Congress do more with CHIP.

Now it's time for us to build on this success.

W.C. Fields once said: "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again. Then quit. No use being a [darn] fool about it."

That's the way I feel about people who attack CHIP. They've tried and tried. But now it's time for them to quit attacking CHIP. Let's recognize success when we see it. And let's enact this CHIP bill into law.